

far the most polyphagous of our clearwings, though oak is normally the preferred pabulum. At Blackheath, also in the Greenwich district, I found it breeding in woody cankers on the trunk of a wych elm *Ulmus glabra* in 1972 (Allen, 1975. *Ent. Rec.* **87**: 47 - 49).— A. A. ALLEN, 49 Montcalm Road, Charlton, London SE7 8QG.

Lasius brunneus* (Latr.) (Hym.: Formicidae) in Hertfordshire and its occurrence on Norway Spruce *Picea abies

The ant *Lasius brunneus*, known in Britain since 1923, was first recorded in Hertfordshire in 1971. By the end of 1999, a gathering stream of records, most of them originating from a few observers and often not the result of systematic searching, had brought the Hertfordshire total to nearly twenty discrete localities. Most reports have been from the expected semi-natural woodland, parkland or hedgerow sites, but also included records of domestic infestations at Berkhamsted and in the house of the present writer's parents at Garston, near Watford.

L. brunneus is known to utilise a wide variety of deciduous trees for nesting, at least eleven different genera being quoted in Donisthorpe (British Ants, 1927). In 1996, trails were discovered on the trunk of a mature *Picea abies* in Whippendell Wood, near Watford, and later in the same year I located further trails on a similar specimen at Bricket Wood. Both localities are ancient woodland sites graded as SSSI status, and in both cases apparently suitable mature deciduous timber was present nearby. On 5 May 1999, at the Bricket Wood site, workers were present on all the mature *P. abies* trees that I examined, either on trails on the trunk or beaten from foliage. It is likely, although not certain, that nesting was taking place in at least one tree.

There seem to be few records of *L. brunneus* utilising coniferous trees, despite the presence of both ant and spruce in the Scandinavian countries, where such an affiliation might be expected to occur: Collingwood (*Fauna Entomologica Scandinavica*. vol 8, 1979) reflects other sources in stating "old trees, chiefly oak". In view of the growth in records of *L. brunneus* recently, both in Hertfordshire and elsewhere in southern England, those interested in the species should not confine their attentions solely to deciduous trees, and mature *Picea* in suitable habitat should be searched for its presence.— C. M. EVERETT, Wolfson College, Cambridge CB3 9BB.

Steve Church

The entomological community was saddened to receive the news of the sudden death of Steve Church from a heart attack on 11 January 2000, at the age of only 51. Steve's endless optimism and positivity served as an inspiration to all who came into contact with him. Although he contributed little to this journal (he always said that writing was something he planned to do in retirement), he made an outstanding contribution to entomology through his field work. Almost never going to known sites to collect rare species, he made constant searches for such moths at new sites and was constantly seeking moths presumed to be extinct by visiting their former sites and similar habitats nearby. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him and our sympathies go to Lucy and other members of his close family.

Colin W. Plant